



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

HOMERIC HIATUS

THE object of this paper is to call the attention of teachers to the unsatisfactory form in which the laws of Homeric hiatus are stated, in the best and most recent manuals, and to point the way, if possible, to a clearer and more intelligible account of this important subject. The portion of Homer which I shall make the basis of the discussion is the first three books of the *Iliad*, since these books are of special interest to American teachers.

Professor Jebb, in his chapter on Homeric Versification,¹ states the laws of hiatus as follows:

Hiatus is allowed in Homeric verse under the following conditions:

1. After the vowel *ι*, or *υ*.
2. Where a caesura comes between the words. . . . The feminine caesura of the third foot . . . is that which most frequently excuses hiatus.
3. After the first foot.
4. Before (at?) the bucolic diæresis.
5. When the vowel at the end of the first word is long, and belongs to the ictus-syllable of a foot.
6. When a long vowel, or diphthong, is made short before the following vowel or diphthong.

This statement seems to me to be unsatisfactory, for the following reasons:

1. No effort is made to explain *why* hiatus is allowed under the circumstances described. The student receives the impression that the whole subject is governed by arbitrary or conventional law alone. He is led to believe that hiatus is avoided, and then informed that it is tolerated under a variety of conditions, and a variety so large and so miscellaneous that he wonders why it was worth while to consider hiatus as exceptional at all.

2. The different situations in which hiatus is allowed are not arranged in any intelligible order, either of logical development or of frequency of occurrence or importance to the student. Rule 1 covers a very few cases only. Rules 2, 3, and 4 are not

¹ Introduction to Homer, pp. 193 f.

strictly rules for allowable hiatus (see below), but merely efforts to explain or classify a few sporadic cases. Rules 5 and 6 are by far the most important of all, though rule 6 ("improper" hiatus) belongs to a class by itself. Rules 1 and 5 belong together, as will appear in the following more detailed comments:

Rule 1. This applies to so small a number of cases (but seven in books A-Γ) that it is scarcely worth mentioning. Hiatus after *v*, in particular, is extremely rare. Some explanation should certainly be added.

Rules 2, 3, 4. These also apply to but a handful of cases. There are in A-Γ, all told (at the three places in the verse specially named) but twenty-one cases of hiatus which are not otherwise accounted for. Nine of these are at the diæresis after the first foot, seven at the caesura in the third foot (to which rule 2 gives an unwarranted importance), and five at the bucolic diæresis. On the other hand, at places *not* mentioned in the rules, there are four at the diæresis after the second foot, three at the diæresis after the fifth foot, one at the diæresis after the third foot, and two at the caesura in the second foot. In the face of these facts, which could easily be confirmed by a wider scope of investigation, it seems hardly worth while to set up rules which justify hiatus at special points in the verse. We can only say that irregular hiatus occurs occasionally in almost all parts of the verse; a little more often, perhaps, at the end of the first and fourth feet, and at the caesura in the third foot, than elsewhere. I cannot but think that the statements frequently made as to the large number of cases of hiatus at the feminine caesura in the third foot include many examples which easily admit of some other explanation.¹

Rule 5. This is an important rule, but surely some effort should be made to explain the reason for these cases, which number 156 in A-Γ.

Rule 6. This is by far the most important rule of all, covering 602 out of the 1076 occurrences of real or apparent hiatus in A-Γ. This fact, together with the "improper" character of the hiatus in these cases, since (semi-) elision has really taken place, should certainly be placed in a conspicuous light.

It is by no means suggested that the brilliant scholar, from whose charming little book I have cited the above rules, is ignorant of the facts which I have stated. No doubt Mr. Jebb *sees*

¹ This may be illustrated by an examination of a few of the cases of hiatus at the point in question, taking them up in order, from the beginning of A. The hiatus in 2 is justified by the elision. 4, *φελάρια*. 17, semi-elision. 30, semi-elision. 46, semi-elision. 112, semi-elision. 172, *φάναξ*. 190, *φερυσσάμενος*. 233, semi-elision. 242, semi-elision. 260, semi-elision. 266, semi-elision, etc. Not till 565 do we find a case of hiatus (at the point in question) which seems to be excused by the caesura, and even here the pause in sense may be the sounder explanation.

the whole subject in a perfectly correct light, but his rules, repeated for the most part in a form handed down by tradition, are certainly misleading to the young teacher, and need sifting and clarifying. Only in the matter of hiatus in the third foot can there be any real difference of opinion. I am inclined to think that theories of the origin of the Homeric hexameter, from a union of two shorter verses, have led many to attach too much importance to the point of juncture in the third foot as an excuse for hiatus there. Such an opinion is scarcely justified by the facts, which show that cases of hiatus, not otherwise accounted for, are scattered with some approach to uniformity throughout the verse.

Passing now to the constructive part of this discussion, I shall endeavor to suggest a form of statement of the laws of Homeric hiatus, which shall be free from some of the difficulties which I have mentioned.

We must begin by grasping clearly the relation of hiatus to elision. It is customary, in Homeric poetry, wherever a final vowel is followed immediately, in the same verse, by a word beginning with a vowel, for the final vowel, if short, to be elided, and if long, to be half-elided, *i. e.*, to lose half of its quantity. When this regular process of elision, or semi-elision, fails to take place, the fact calls for explanation. Hiatus, then, is the neglect of elision, or semi-elision. The explanation of hiatus should always take the form of an answer to the question "Why is the final vowel not elided, or half-elided?"

A real or apparent violation of the law of elision may take place under the following circumstances:

A. APPARENT HIATUS

1. When the second word originally began with a consonant, the presence of that consonant (usually, but not always, the digamma), or even its memory, if it had already faded from use, was a natural and sufficient barrier against elision. This accounts for 240 of the cases of neglected elision in A-Γ, or almost one fourth of the whole number.

B. IMPROPER HIATUS

2. When the first word ended in two vowels, one of which has already suffered elision, a second elision would maim the word so much that it would scarcely be recognizable. At the same time, the elision which has already taken place tends to bind the two words so closely together in pronunciation that the hiatus is not felt. This rule applies to 40 places in A-Γ.

3. When a long vowel at the end of the first word has lost half its quantity before the following vowel, semi-elision has already taken place, so that the law of elision is satisfied. There are no less than 602 cases of this in A-Γ.

C. JUSTIFIABLE HIATUS

4. The vowel *υ* is never elided, and the vowel *ι* but seldom. The ability of these vowels to resist elision is probably due to their semi-consonantal character. When *ι* is followed closely by another vowel it tends to develop a *γ* sound, and *υ*, in the same way, a *ω* sound, which interpose an obstacle to elision. But since few words end in *υ*, and final *ι* is often protected by *ν* movable, there are but few cases of hiatus after *ι* (six cases) and *υ* (one case) in A-Γ.

5. In the accented part of the foot, the metrical accent itself often seems to give the vowel sufficient firmness to enable it to resist elision. This rule may seem to be irrational, and a mere device to explain hiatus. But the fact that there are, in A-Γ, no less than 156 cases of hiatus after a long vowel in the thesis, seems to justify the explanation just given. We should scarcely venture to class all of these as cases of "illicit" hiatus, when so satisfactory an explanation of the non-elision is at hand.

D. ILLICIT HIATUS.

The principles thus far stated account for 1045 out of the 1076 cases of real or apparent hiatus in A-Γ. In all of these the neglect of elision is due to some legitimate and easily discerned cause. The 31 remaining cases¹ may fairly be called "illicit," and explained as due to negligence of style. A few of

¹ A 27, 39, 145, 203, 333, 505, 532, 551, 565, 568, 569. B 8, 87, 90, 105, 107, 198, 216, 218, 231, 253, 262, 315, 332, 397, 528, 625, 697. Γ 24, 46, 379.

these, to be sure, occur at points where there is a pause in the sense which may excuse the hiatus (so in B 218), and others at certain recognized metrical stopping-places, such as the pauses after the first foot, in the third foot, and after the fourth foot. Others may perhaps be explained in future as "apparent," when our knowledge of etymology enables us to discover still other lost consonants. In desperate cases, the text will perhaps be emended.

SUMMARY FOR A-Γ¹

Lost consonant	-	-	-	-	-	-	240
Elision	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
Semi-elision	-	-	-	-	-	-	602
After ι	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
After υ	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
After long vowels in thesis					-	-	156
Other cases	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	1076
Apparent Hiatus	-	-	-	-	-	-	240
Improper Hiatus	-	-	-	-	-	-	642
Justifiable Hiatus	-	-	-	-	-	-	163
Illicit Hiatus	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	1076

EDWARD B. CLAPP

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

¹This summary is intended to be complete and exact. But in collecting and classifying so many examples, both eye and mind tend to become bewildered, and some errors may have crept in.